

John French Farm (Tract #10900)  
.3 miles south of South Grand River, 1.8 miles  
west of Benton County line  
Deepwater Vicinity  
Henry County  
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1245

HABS,  
MO.  
42-DEEP.V.  
5-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. MO-1245

JOHN FRENCH FARM  
(Tract #10900)Location:

0.3 miles south of South Grand River, 1.8 miles west of Benton County line, approximately 3.5 miles south of Tightwad, Deepwater Vicinity, Henry County, Missouri.

USGS Leesville Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 15.451445.4234560.

Present Owner:

United States Army Corps of Engineers, Kansas City District.

Present Use:

Vacant.

Significance:

The John D. French Farm was a stock farm of more than a thousand acres with improvements of fine quality. The large two story house with a one story rear ell is exceptional in the area for its size and detailing, and demonstrates the perserverance of a vernacular type current in Kentucky in the mid-nineteenth century. The complex includes a large three aisle barn, a smokehouse/ root cellar and a log house remodelled to serve as an animal/shelter shed.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION:

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1895. George French sold his share in the land to his son John in 1888. In 1892, John married his second wife. The date "1895" is carved into a foundation stone near the kitchen door.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: S 1/2 SW 1/4 SW 1/4 Section 11 Township 40 N Range 24 W. Benjamin B. Edwards entered the land June 1, 1859 (239: 240); to George Morrell, March 9, 1867 (S: 29); to John D. and George French, November 1, 1880 (31: 356); to John D. French, October 18, 1888 (76: 40); to Almira French, January 21, 1922 (241:558, Will); to Union Electric Land Development Company, December 22, 1930 (270:477); to Henry Brown, January 29, 1937 (291: 397); to John W. Brown, February 20, 1954 (351: 190, Will).

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Everett French remembers the barn being built by his grandfather and the farmhands. There was, however, mention of one Steve Randall who supposedly had a local reputation as a builder of barns at the turn of the century.
5. Original plan and construction: The house is an L-plan, formed by a center hall two story "I" with a one story rear ell. Unlike the majority of L-plan houses in the survey area, the rear ell is not an addition. The use of the rooms has been described as follows: on the first floor, opening off the center hall, was a "fancy" parlor to the east and, to the west, an everyday or "family" room. The kitchen, pantry and porch were in the rear ell. On the second floor, the large stair landing served as another sitting room; the woodwork here is grained, indicating a rather sophisticated effort at interior decoration. Two bedrooms opened off this room. The exterior of the house was painted white, the shutters green; the door and window trim was beige and the eaves and corner boards were green. The barn is of the three-aisle type with a major transverse aisle, making a cross plan. The tool shed/animal shelter is fashioned from an earlier log house with V-notched corner timbering. This is a typical adaptive use of the structure for the area. It is thought that Benjamin Edwards, the original settler, might have built this house, where French could have lived while his own house was completed.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

John D. French was born in Taylor County, Kentucky, in 1848, and came to Missouri with his parents in 1854. He and his father bought this bottomland farm in 1880. By all accounts a wealthy man, French established here a stock farm of more than a thousand acres.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: Photograph of John and Almira French in front of what is probably the recently completed house. Photocopy attached. Courtesy of Mrs. Martin.
2. Bibliography:
  - a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deed Books S: 29, 31: 356, 76: 40, 239: 240, 241: 558, 270: 477, 291: 397, 351: 190; Marriage records, F: 425; Probate, box 141; in the Registry of Deeds, Henry County Courthouse, Clinton.

Interviews: Everet French, RFD 2, Clinton, grandson of the builder. August 7, 1977. Mrs. Martin, Clinton, grandniece of the builder. August, 1977. Mrs. Lee Miller, Clinton, grandniece of the builder. August 1 and 7, 1977.

b. Secondary and published sources:

Clinton Eye. May 12, 1922: John D. French obituary.

Prepared by Paul Garfield Weed  
Historian  
Historic American  
Buildings Survey  
Summer 1977

## II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is a large complex of house and farm buildings of good quality. The house is a two story L-plan with central stair hall. The large three aisle barn has a cross aisle and a large second floor loft. The original log house on the site has been converted to a tool shed and animal shelter by lean-to additions. There is a smokehouse above the root cellar, and a washhouse behind the main house.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair. The house has been vacant for several years but has not been vandalized too much because of its remote location.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: This two-story L-plan house has a five-bay front, 34'-3" wide, by 32'-3" deep with a 7'-6" deep porch.
2. Foundation: Ashlar sandstone is laid around perimeter. The date "1895" is carved into a stone near the north corner on the west side of the rear wing.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: Weatherboards over balloon frame. The siding is painted white, the shutters and screen trim are painted green, and the door and window trim, corner boards and eaves are painted beige.
4. Structural system: Balloon framing.

5. Porches: The front porch is 7'-6" x 10'-2" with wood flooring, 4" x 4" posts supporting a shed roof, and a railing with square handrail and balusters. There is a screened porch in the rear ell.
6. Chimneys: Three interior brick stove chimneys, one in each gable.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The door openings have lintels with cyma recta moldings. The front door, now missing, had a large rectangular glass panel surrounded by a frame of smaller rectangles and squares. Directly below the glass panel was a row of three square panels with bosses at their centers. Below each square panel was a vertical rectangular panel and the upper and lower sections were framed by split spindles. Other doors have four vertical rectangular panels.
  - b. Windows: The windows have two-over-two-light double hung wooden sashes. The lintels with cyma recta moldings match the door frames. The windows on the first floor are slightly longer than those on the second. All windows originally had shutters, though many are now missing.
8. Roof: The gable roof has wood shingles. The rear wing has a broken gable roof.

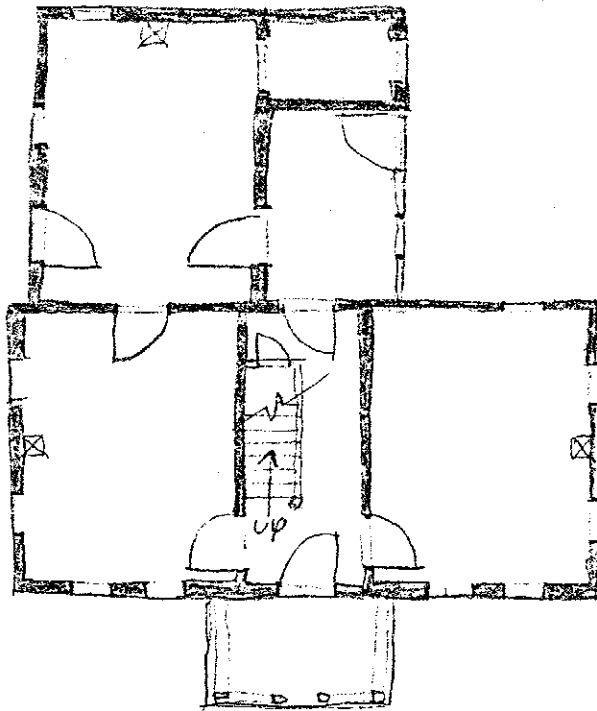
C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The three major rooms of the first floor are arranged in an L. The front door enters on a central stair hall, with a room on either side of the hall. Beyond lies a screened porch and pantry on the rear wing, and the kitchen west of that. At the second floor the central room is a large sitting room. A larger bedroom opens on the west, and a smaller one on the east.
2. Stairway: The stairway in the central hall has a banister supported by undecorated vertical supports, and a large wooden ball on top of the newel post. There is a storage closet under the stairs.
3. Flooring: Tongue and groove wood flooring.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster on wood lath. Novelty siding wainscoting in the southwest and northwest rooms.
5. Doors: The doors have four vertical rectangular panels. The doors opening onto the stair hall have hand-painted graining.

6. Trim: All door and window frames and baseboards are set flush with the plaster wall surface. All of the woodwork in the second-floor hall has hand-painted graining.
7. Hardware: All doors have rimlock hardware.
8. Mechanical equipment: There are metal sleeves in the ceilings of the two front rooms to receive flues from stoves directly under the end chimneys.

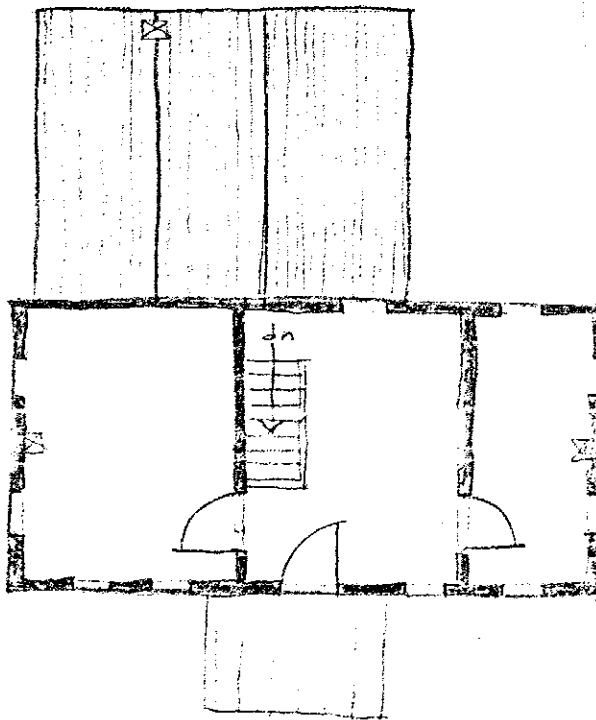
D. Site:

1. General setting: The house, set on a hill above the south bank of the South Grand River, faces south, surrounded by a fenced yard.
2. Outbuildings:
  - a. Northwest of the house is a large three-aisle barn with a major cross aisle. The barn, frame with board and batten siding, is 51' wide x 76'-2" long with a lean-to addition on the west side. The plan is divided into three aisles with large rectangular pens filling the four corners, two on the west side for grain storage, two on the east side for animals, opening directly to the outside through the east wall. At the second level is a large loft with the four corner pens repeated. A rain hood with a decorative spiral ridge ornament protects the pulley and wire mechanism for raising hay into the loft.
  - b. Just west of the house is a log house about 18' square with a 9' wide lean-to on the south and west sides. The log house sits on a piled stone foundation about 2'-6" high. Originally one room at the first floor with doors on two sides, a plank partition was added when it was turned into a tool shed. Steep wooden stairs on the east side of the room led to the second-floor attic. Board and batten siding was put on the exposed east and north side, while the logs were left exposed on the south and west under the lean-to.
  - c. On the eastern edge of the backyard there is a smokehouse with a projecting roof and end walls. A steep stair leads up to the wooden structure, and high basement walls of concrete are part of the root cellar under the smokehouse. Access to the cellar is by stairs under a hatch.

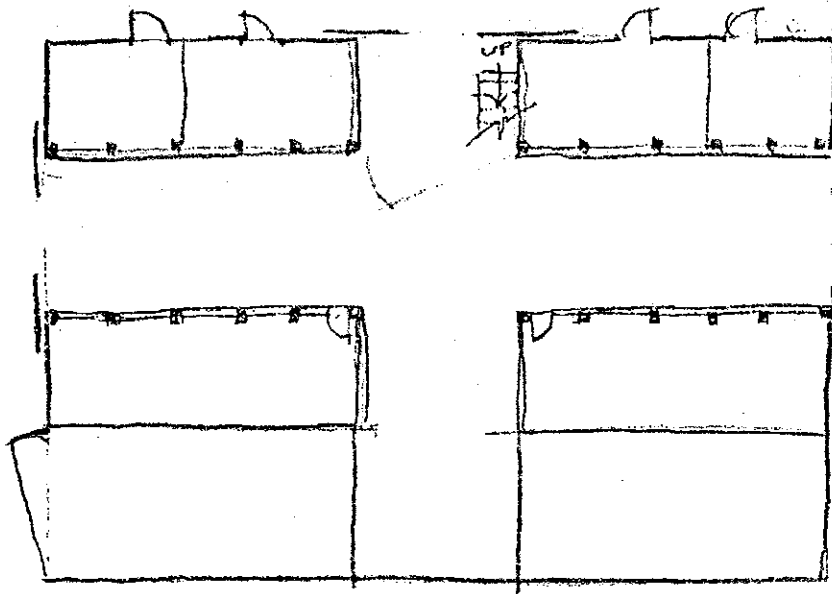


FIRST FLOOR PLAN

JOHN FRENCH HOUSE  
#10900

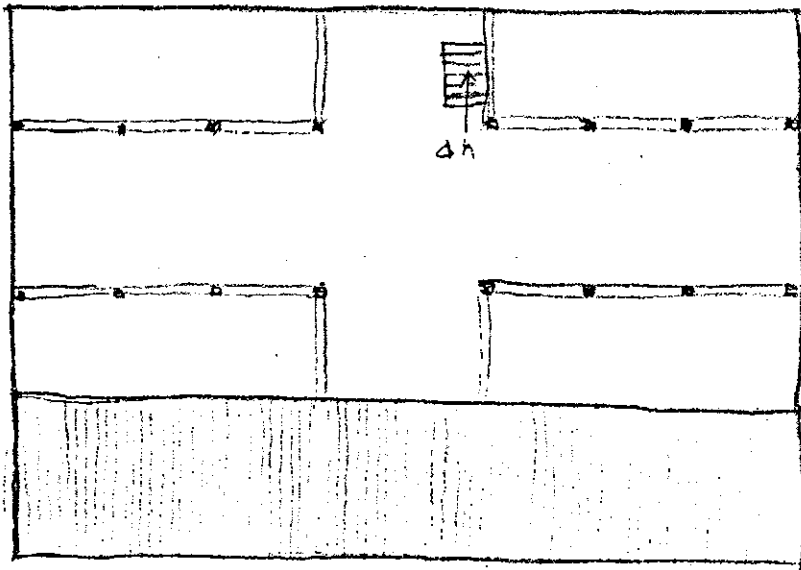


SECOND FLOOR PLAN JOHN FRENCH HOUSE  
#10900



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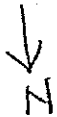
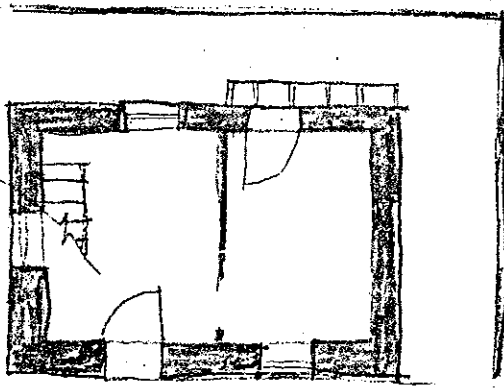
FIRST FLOOR: FRENCH BARN #10900



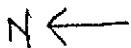
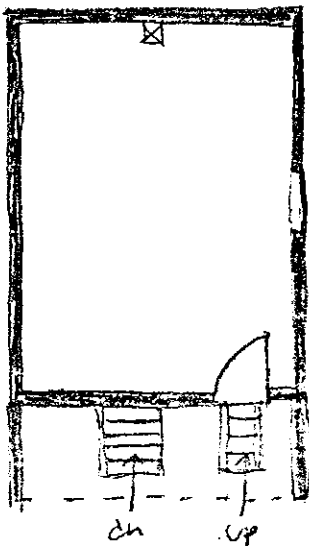
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SECOND FLOOR FRENCH BARN #10900

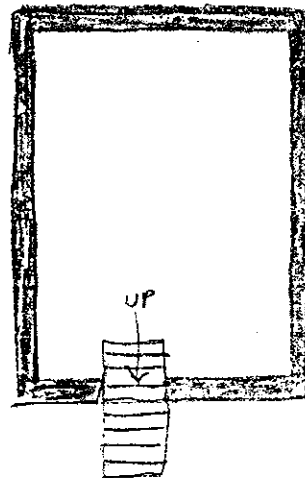




PLAN 'FRENCH' LOG HOUSE / SHED  
#10900



FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
FRENCH SMOKEHOUSE  
#10900



CELLAR PLAN  
FRENCH SMOKEHOUSE  
#10900

Prepared by William Brookover  
Project Supervisor  
Historic American  
Buildings Survey  
Summer 1977

PART II. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Truman Reservoir Project was funded by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Kansas City District, in compliance with Executive Order 11593 as a mitigative effort in the construction of the Harry S Truman Dam and Reservoir, in the summer of 1977. William Brookover (Columbia University), supervisor; Michael Connor (University of Virginia), team foreman; Gary Baker (Catholic University), Edwin Daniel (Mississippi State), and Gary Statkus (University of Illinois), student architects; Paul Weed (Columbia University), architectural historian.